

Acts 2:14a, 36-47

Easter 2, April 16, 2023

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But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them,... "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

What would you have done if you had been one of the people who had seen Jesus after He rose from the dead? Would you have reacted like some of Jesus' followers after they had seen the risen Christ?

- Would you have been like Mary Magdalene who immediately went and told Jesus' disciples that He had risen just as Jesus had told her to do?
- Would you have been like the other women who had come to Jesus' tomb, who, when Jesus met them **"held Him by the feet and worshipped Him"**? (Matthew 28:9)
- Would you have been like the two disciples who were walking with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, who, after realizing they had seen the risen Savior said, **"Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"** (Luke 24:32) and then immediately went back to Jerusalem—7 miles away, at night—to tell the rest of the disciples that they had seen Jesus?
- Or would you have been like those disciples who were locked in the room on Easter Sunday night, who, even after Jesus appeared and spoke to them and showed His hands and feet they **"still did not believe for joy, and marveled."** (Luke 24:41)

Maybe you wouldn't have reacted like any one of these Easter Sunday eyewitnesses. Maybe you wouldn't have been able to say or do anything at all and would have just stood there with your eyes wide and mouth open. Maybe you would have cried tears of joy to see Jesus alive again. Maybe. Who knows? The fact is we were not there on that Resurrection Day to see Jesus with our own two eyes, so we will never know—not in this life at least—what that feeling is like or how we would react to seeing our risen Savior. But we do know for certain that Jesus is risen and alive! God Himself has given us the sure and certain testimony of eyewitnesses, whom He Himself inspired to write about Jesus' resurrection. And this testimony is more sure and certain than if even our own two eyes saw Jesus for ourselves!

When we look for examples of how we should react to the resurrection of Jesus shouldn't we search

the Scriptures for people who are in our situation: People who heard about the resurrection of Jesus from God's inspired eyewitnesses, but had not seen the risen Savior for themselves? Our text for this morning contains such a group of people. The crowd that had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost was made up of people from far beyond the borders of Jerusalem. (cf. Acts 2:5-11) Therefore, it is highly likely that most of the people who were listening to Peter's Spirit-inspired sermon were NOT eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection.

Yet we are told that God worked the miracle of conversion in the hearts of many on that day of Pentecost through Peter's preaching. Luke tells us in verse 41, ***Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*** These people, like us, had not seen the risen Christ, but believed on the basis of God's Word to them through the eyewitness Peter and were saved. However, that was not the only **Reaction to the Resurrection** that the Holy Spirit produced in these **1. Early New Testament Christians**. The most important part had been taken care of: God's Word had produced repentant faith in the hearts of **"about three thousand"** (v.41) hearers that day. Our text also tells us that the Holy Spirit produced many incredible "fruits" of repentance and "fruits of faith" in the hearts and lives of the entire Christian church in Jerusalem for many days after this miracle of Pentecost.

Let's look at what they did: First of all Luke tells us in v. 42, ***And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*** The ***"apostles' doctrine [teaching]"*** was exactly what Jesus taught. Their teachings were the very words of God, just as Jesus had commanded in the Great Commission: ***"[teach] them to obey everything I have commanded you."*** (Matthew 28:20 NIV) These early New Testament Christians, then, ***"continued steadfastly"*** in the Word of God and in ***"fellowship"*** with the apostles. They also ***"continued steadfastly"*** in the ***"breaking of bread"*** together, which refers to their fellowship meals together, called *Agape*, or love feasts, during which the Lord's Supper was celebrated. These early New Testament Christians also expressed their unity and faith with the apostles and their fellow believers by ***"continuing steadfastly"*** in ***"prayers."***

Our text also tells us that these early New Testament Christians expressed their unity of faith and devotion to the apostle's teaching in a way that was unique in all of Scripture, ***"Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need."*** (v. 44-45) Notice the text does not tell us that this sharing of all things among the believers was commanded by the apostles. They weren't trying to put some sort of God-mandated economic theory into practice either (as some have falsely tried to propose). No, these early New Testament Christians in Jerusalem shared in all things both spiritually and physically as an expression of their love for their risen Lord and Savior and for their brothers and sisters in Christ. They were in every sense of the word completely devoted to the ***"fellowship" (sharing)***. And remember, most of these people had not even seen the risen Lord Jesus for themselves! They were trusting steadfastly and solely on the ***"apostles' [teaching]"*** and their eyewitness accounts of Christ.

What about us? What about **2. our Reaction to the Resurrection**? It has now been a week since we've celebrated the miraculous resurrection of our Savior Jesus on Easter Sunday. Are we still living in the joy of the Resurrection, like those early New Testament Christians did months after Christ rose from the dead? Can people see it in our lives? Can they hear it in our voices? Can they sense the sincerity of our hearts as we prepare for another Sunday of worship? If not, why not? Aren't we in much the same

position as those early New Testament Christians: redeemed and forgiven through Christ's perfect life and innocent sacrifice on the cross? Haven't we been made God's own sons and daughters through the miracle of baptism? Aren't we also dependent on the Holy Spirit's work through the words of His inspired eyewitnesses, the apostles? Yes, yes, and yes!

We have also been greatly blessed with some of the same fruits of faith that were evident in the lives of the early New Testament Christians; gifts which I think too often we take for granted. By God's grace, we devote ourselves each week—and hopefully even each day—to the ***“apostles' doctrine,”*** the very inspired Words of God written down for us in the New Testament. We also base our ***“fellowship”*** on that Word, and only that Word, not on reason, or on compromise. We also express that fellowship with each other through the ***“breaking of bread”*** at the Lord's Supper and in ***“prayers.”*** Haven't we also ***“shared”*** our ***“possessions and goods”*** with many who are in need, both locally and for others in our fellowship across the country and around the world? Consider how amazingly God has blessed us, not only with our saving faith, but with the Spirit-driven ability to express our faith, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and materially. These things that I have just mentioned go completely against our human nature and simply could not and would not be done on our own! The Holy Spirit has blessed us with some of the same **Reactions to the Resurrection** that we find in the early New Testament Christians! We have much in common with this incredibly strong, growing fellowship of believers in Jerusalem.

How did they remain spiritually strong and continue to grow in faith and in numbers? The last two verses of our text tell us, ***So continuing daily with one accord*** [literally: one mind, one purpose; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10] ***in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity*** [literally: sincerity] ***of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people.*** **And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.** (Acts 2:46-47)

Isn't that the same method we use? Don't we ***“continue daily with one accord,”*** with one mind and one purpose, basing our fellowship solely on the Word of God? Yes, we do. Where then does the problem usually lie for us? Doesn't it often boil down to what ***“all the people”*** in Jerusalem—believers and unbelievers alike—could see very clearly in the lives of these early New Testament Christians? Our text tells us that these believers had ***“favor with all the people.”*** (v. 47) Was it just because they ***“continued daily with one accord”*** in fellowship with each other and in steadfastness to the ***“apostles' [teaching]”***? No, because they could have done that in their “own little corner,” in private, where no one else would have heard their faithful teaching and preaching. Instead, they did it publicly ***“in the temple.”*** (v. 46) If they hadn't also lived their lives according to the ***“apostles' [teaching]”*** the people of Jerusalem probably wouldn't thought much of their Christian faith, either. Instead, they both ***“continued daily with one accord”*** in the apostles' teaching and did it with ***“gladness and simplicity [sincerity] of heart, praising God.”*** (v. 46-47)

Does the ***“gladness”*** of our faith always shine through in our lives? Does the ***“[sincerity] of our hearts”*** come through in all we say and do? Are we “playing” Christian, or are we actually living and being followers of Christ? Does the ***“[sincerity] of our hearts”*** come through in our worship? Are we just “playing” church, or are we truly worshiping and ***“praising”*** a risen, living, and almighty God and Savior?

Our Savior lives! That's a fact! Be **glad**, live joyfully! The same Holy Spirit that worked "**sincerity**" in the hearts of those early New Testament Christians is still at work in our hearts and lives through the Words of His apostles. Let people see that **sincerity** in your words when you speak to them and in your whole life that you live in front of them. Our Savior lives!

Now, obviously our **Reaction to the Resurrection** by the way we live our lives won't bring anyone to faith in Jesus, but it can certainly tear down many obstacles and hindrances to their faith. It will also give others a living example of the power and blessedness of the Gospel of the crucified and risen Savior, Jesus. When they ask us why we live the way we do we can share with them exactly what the apostles' taught: the very Words of God. We can do this with "**gladness**," "**sincerity**," and with the "**praise**" of God in our hearts because it is the truth of the saving Gospel of the risen Christ that we are sharing with these needy, dying souls. We can be confident, also, that through this powerful, saving Gospel the Lord will continue to "**[add] daily to the church those who [are] being saved.**" (v. 47) Amen.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7) Amen.